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TRENDS IN WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE ECONOMY

Report by the secretariat

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Introduction

1. The situation of women in the economy within the ECE region differs depending on whether a short-term or a long-term view is taken. While the short-term analysis indicates a deterioration in their situation, resulting from the poor economic performance of the countries in the region, the long-term perspective points at a considerable integration of women into the economic activities. Such an approach to gender analysis does not, however, reflect the important changes in the economic environment in the ECE region as well as in women's position and linkages with the economy.

2. Nearly ten years after the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Nairobi, 1985), the discussion on women's role in the economy is held in a radically different setting. The world has become less predictable and coherent. The collapse of communism had ended the ideological division between countries. The radical reforms in the former planned economies have been paralleled by the erosion of the traditional concept of the welfare state in the western market economies, which determined the balance between capital, organized labour and the State. Prolonged recession, technological change, globalization and environmental concerns have not only encouraged the restructuring of economic activities but have also called into question the nature of civil society and conditions for growth sustainability. The responses to these challenges and new strategies, although not fully-fledged, focus on the quality of human resources and increasingly concern social issues.

3. Women's participation in the labour market has increased markedly in all countries in the ECE region. The level and quality of female activities now have a significant impact on the overall economic performance, in particular in the service sector, where their presence in the labour force is the strongest. Against the background of the current demographic trends, with the working-age population declining in some countries, women are now an important supply of human capital, providing the bulk of new labour in the region. The feminization of the labour force has considerably enlarged women's contribution to economic growth in the formal sector, bringing them both more social and more economic independence. In this sense women have become active partners of men in the development process.

4. The change in women's position in the economy has been little recognized at policy levels. In most countries in the ECE region, formal institutions and regulations related to the labour market and welfare systems, as well as informal institutions, that is value systems and behaviours, still reflect the standards of the past: the man as sole breadwinner, security of employment and large industrial firms. Despite the progress made in the area of equal opportunities for women, including in narrowing the wage gap, most agenda items from the Nairobi Conference will also be discussed at the Beijing Conference. They have, in the meantime, however, taken on a new dimension, as changes in the economic environment and the new position of women in the economy have transformed many old problems, raised new issues and opened new avenues for women's advancement.

5. This report argues that viewing women's issues through the lenses of social and welfare policies is no longer economically justified. Women should not be looked at, as in the past, as a passive and disadvantaged social

group 1/ but as principal, even if not yet equal in many ways to men, economic actors. Building a gender-sensitive growth strategy, based on partnership between men and women, requires radical changes in the existing institutional frameworks. It requires also a new approach and new methods for formulating economic and social policies aimed at accommodating women's new role and all its consequences. Such a strategy is crucial for growth revival and its sustainability in a context of human-centred development. As a result, the gender analysis should now be part of a broader framework of economic analysis instead of a traditional sociological issue.

6. From this perspective, long-term and cyclical changes in development trends, patterns and strategies include both adverse effects as well as opportunities for women. Persistent unemployment and cuts in social expenditures have lowered the living standards in the whole ECE region, leading to more poverty. The opportunities remain largely untapped, in particular when substantial improvements in women's education are considered. In western market economies and in eastern and central European economies alike, women's jobs are segregated at the lower end of the labour market, upward mobility and career prospects are limited, and increasingly inadequate to women's skills and education. Many women are also left outside the full-time employment market. At the same time the fast growing need to coordinate women's work and family obligations is poorly reflected in the social infrastructure and in the sharing of family responsibilities.

7. The report covers a broad overview of development trends and women's situations within the ECE region. Many of these aspects are further discussed in more details in other papers, in particular on employment and entrepreneurship and the role of women in the transition process (see E/ECE/RW/HLM/4 and 5). To present an overview of economic trends in the region, this report relies on the work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and in particular on the Economic Survey of Europe and the Economic Bulletin for Europe. The analysis of women's issues refers to the main thrust of the work of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in particular the draft Platform for Action (annex to resolution 38/10, 18 March 1994) and other documents.2/ It also refers to the results of a series of consultative meetings organized by the ECE in preparation of the Beijing Conference, as well as other ECE works in this area.3/

8. The main purpose of this report is to highlight development trends within the ECE region in order to identify key areas of gender concern and formulate action-oriented proposals aimed at lowering the transaction costs of women's participation in economic activities. The report is divided into four chapters. Chapter I presents major development trends in the region and their relation to women. Chapter II discusses the main changes in women's position within the economy and society. Chapter III includes an overview of policies and institutional adjustments; and Chapter IV identifies key areas of gender concern in the changing economic environment in the region and includes broad directions for action at policy level to address these concerns.

I. DEVELOPMENT TRENDS WITHIN THE ECE REGION

9. This section highlights four major development trends in the ECE region: (i) recession and rising unemployment, (ii) growing share of the service sector and feminization of the labour force; (iii) pervasive impact of new

technologies on economic activities; (iv) globalization of economic activities and growing environmental concerns.

Table 1

Civilian employment and employment in service sector by sex, 1970-1990
(Increase in % per decade)

Country	1970 - 1980				1980 - 1990			
	Total civilian employment	Employment in service sector			Total civilian employment	Employment in service sector		
		Total	Men	Women		Total	Men	Women
North America	27	37	29	45	19	28	21	34
Canada	35	45	64	30	17	27	16	38
U.S.	26	36	26	47	19	28	22	33
4 major countries in western Europe	3	21	13	30	5	21	15	27
France	5	23	16	31	2	18	12	23
Germany	1	18	13	24	6	22	15	30
Italy	6	25	15	47	4	28	22	38
UK	3	18	9	28	6	18	12	24

Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics, 1968-1988 and 1971-1991, and estimates

A. Recession and unemployment

10. Since 1989 the decline in economic growth rates in absolute and/or relative terms has been the major factor in the unemployment figures throughout the ECE region - with the exception of the United States where employment picked up in 1993. The sharp rise in unemployment, including that of women, has had adverse effects on incomes and living standards. It has led to economic insecurity, fear for the future and social unrest across the ECE region. In overall terms, women have been most affected as well as men in the emerging market economies in eastern and central Europe. Figure I below illustrates the changes in growth rates, unemployment and women's unemployment in major groups of ECE countries.

Growth rates have slowed and growth prospects are moderate for most countries in the region...

11. During 1989-1993, gross domestic product (GDP) and industrial output declined in absolute and/or relative terms in all ECE countries, especially in eastern and central Europe. In western market economies the decline differed from the well-known pattern of cyclical changes of the past. It has lasted longer and gone further than in the past and has, in most countries, affected all economic sectors, including services, in particular the retail trade, transport and financial services.

12. Recovery in most ECE countries, except perhaps the United States, has been slow, lowering expectations for a rapid and spontaneous upturn. Real GDP in western Europe is currently projected to increase by just under 2% in 1994 (1.5% for France and Italy; 2.0% for Germany; and 3% for the United Kingdom4/). The slow recovery could be related to the many structural factors behind the current recession and reflecting the impact of adjusting these economies to global competition and technology change although cyclical and country - specific factors also played a role.

...while unemployment increases in many countries reaching higher levels for women than men...

13. The steep increase in unemployment is a major policy problem in the ECE region. In western Europe unemployment has been on the rise for the past three years,5/ reaching the weighted annual average unemployment rate of 10.3% with wide disparities between countries and a large share of long-term unemployment. Unemployment in the United States has been lower and has recently dropped. This is usually explained by the country's more flexible labour market, which encourages the creation of new jobs. However, the United States like western Europe, has a high and rising level of youth unemployment; together they have some 10 million jobless youngsters.6/ The rise in unemployment has also been one of the major costs of economic reform in eastern and central Europe, where unemployment rates at the end of 1993 ranged from 10 to 30%, except for the Czech Republic and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) where the rates were lower.7/ Female unemployment levels are higher than men's in many countries within the ECE region, though the gap between female and male unemployment presents a more homogenous pattern in transition economies. Only two countries, Hungary and Slovenia, show higher male unemployment rates.8/

14. Against the background of moderate growth prospects, it seems unlikely that unemployment within the ECE region will be eliminated or cut significantly, except perhaps in the United States.9/

...straining the existing welfare systems ...

15. Recession and fast rising unemployment have added to the demands on social protection, exhausting public and private resources.

16. Public expenditure on social programmes, including income support programmes and services, has already reached a relatively high level of GDP in most countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Between 1960 and 1980 the cost of social programmes virtually doubled, rising from an average of 13% to 25% of GDP.10/ These programmes could be supported up to mid-1970 thanks to the strong economic growth and the high level of employment. During the 1980s, after the oil crises, with the deterioration of economic performance and growing budgetary constraints, growth in GDP still kept pace with the growth in real expenditure on social protection in the OECD countries. That expenditure represented some 27% of GDP both in 1985 and in 1990. Initial evidence suggests that during the last few years, social expenditure may have risen again.11/ _It is believed that the generous level of social benefits in western Europe explains to a large extend the low competitiveness of European industries through its impact on production costs without a concomitant rise in labour productivity.

17. In eastern and central Europe the situation is more complex. The dramatic decline in growth rates combined with massive unemployment and the rapid process of income polarization have placed a heavy burden on the existing welfare systems, based on across-the-board benefits. Decisions to cut social spending - a politically highly sensitive issue anywhere - are especially difficult in transition societies, where State protection has been the norm for half a century or more.

18. Welfare systems in the eastern and in the western part of the ECE region are now under increasing pressure to enhance the efficiency of public services and to align social spending with available resources. To reconcile the costs of social programmes with budgetary constraints, two well-known but unpopular options are available: increase in direct or indirect taxation, or/and cuts in social benefits in absolute or relative terms, as compared to economic trends. Although few countries have, so far, decided to cut public spending across the board, as the Netherlands did for disability and unemployment benefits between 1983 and 1987 or Ireland and Belgium for unemployment benefits in 1983 and 1987 respectively,12/ most countries achieved similar results through indirect means such as restricting entitlements to benefits, as in many southern countries, but also in Belgium and Denmark. During the past decade efforts to curb social expenditure were common in all western market economies in the ECE region and included the reorganization of State-provided services, stricter controls on public expenditure, privatization and the introduction of market mechanisms.

19. A prolonged reversal of the expansionary trend in public expenditure has serious effects, actual and potential, on jobs and levels of social protection of men and in particular women. It has already resulted in the slow-down or, in few countries such as the United Kingdom, the reversal of employment growth in the public sector. Many women's jobs in health, education and social services were reclassified, which meant moving to less paid and less protected jobs in the private sector, or simply cut, though the pattern of these changes differed from country to country.13/ Women were also affected more than men as recipients of many social benefits. The deterioration of the social infrastructure affected women directly by narrowing down access to and/or diminishing the level of social benefits, and indirectly by adding to women's overloaded time budgets many "care-giving" functions for children, the elderly and the disabled provided formerly by the State. Finally, the pressure to limit social expenditure has its psychological effects on societies fearful of the future levels of social protection.

...lowering living standards in societies in the ECE region, in particular in economies in transition ...

20. Men and women in all ECE countries have been adversely affected by the recession, growing unemployment and the changing trends in social protection. The degree of hardship differs from country to country and depends on the overall economic performance and the accompanying policy measures. Incomes and living standards have dropped most in transition economies, which, together with the sharp rise in death rates, suggests that these societies are also going through a purely physical trauma. In western market economies cuts in income levels were, perhaps, most severe for unskilled workers on the little protected American labour market, where real wages in the lowest-paid 10% of jobs fell by more than 1% a year in the 1980s, and in the United Kingdom,

where social protection has been reduced significantly during the past decade.14/

21. The deterioration in living conditions has been accompanied by a polarization of incomes and an increase in poverty. The traditionally most vulnerable social groups, which follow a similar pattern across countries (elderly on minimum pensions, large families, single-parent families, migrants, minority groups) have been joined by the "new" poor. The number of prime-age urban workers, male and female, in particular among the low-skilled, living on welfare and unemployment benefits is on the rise not only in transition economies but also in North America and western Europe. In Europe there is also another group of "new" poor, consisting of refugees and displaced workers, victims of ethnic strife, in particular in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union.

...though having a different overall impact on men and women.

22. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fully assess the gender impact of the current recession. The number of studies is limited and the existing data, for example, on western Europe present a mixed picture. Given the sectoral impact of the current recession in western Europe, men seem to be losing jobs faster than women. Once lost, however, women's jobs are more difficult to find and unemployment rates for women, including in eastern and central Europe are, with some exceptions such as Hungary, consistently higher than men's. Due to the pattern of the recent recession, women's jobs in the service sector have also been less well protected than during the previous recessions. As a result, female workers are more often discouraged to re-enter the workforce than men.15/

23. There seems to be little doubt that women and men have been affected differently by the recent economic trends due to differences in their employment patterns, levels of wages as well as their uneven dependency on welfare. It could be hypothesized that whilst in western market economies women's employment losses were, perhaps, less severe than men's, other factors such as the generally lower income levels of female workers, the high levels of women's unemployment and their greater dependency on social benefits had strong opposite effects. As a result women tend to fall into poverty more frequently than men, stay in poverty longer and face additional obstacles when trying to work their way out of it. The risk of falling into poverty is, perhaps, the greatest for single mothers and older women living alone.16/

24. Within the ECE region the most rapid proliferation of women's poverty has been in transition countries, except perhaps in the Czech Republic, and in particular in the CIS. In western market economies poverty clusters exist in southern Europe, though recent studies suggest that in the 1980s poverty rates were above average in households headed by women not only in Ireland and Spain but also in Belgium, France and the United Kingdom.17/ Poverty is also a major problem in America's inner cities where pockets of extreme poverty persist, few adults work, most children are raised without fathers and "crime is the career of choice".18/

B. Restructuring of economic activities and feminization of the labour force

25. During the past two decades economic activity in western market economies has undergone deep restructuring, which has had a significant impact on women's employment. In transition economies structural changes have only just begun.

During the past two decades the rapid expansion of the service sector in western market economies ...

26. The rapid expansion of the service sector and the concomitant growth in employment was driven, in particular in the 1980s, by a combined growth in services to businesses and social and personal services. The role of public and private sector services in the growth of the whole service sector differed from country to country. While in many European countries, in particular in Scandinavia, the growth in services was associated more with the rise in public spending on welfare, in the United States and the United Kingdom it was clearly led by the rapid development of financial services, insurance and other private sector services. This trend resulted in the restructuring of economic activities and a shift in resources away from labour-intensive and heavy industries and manufacturing. The share of the service sector in western market economies now amounts on average to over 60% of GDP, and between 50 and 70% of all jobs.

...has increased the demand for women's labour, creating many new jobs for female workers...

27. The expansion of the service sector favoured women's employment due to demographic factors and the fast growing demand for clerical and "caring" positions in the private and public sector. During the 1970s and 1980s, the overwhelming majority of new service jobs in banking and insurance, retailing and public services in Canada, the United States and western Europe were entry-level positions in traditionally female occupations. This largely compensated the loss of female jobs in labour-intensive industries. The levels of feminization of public and private service sectors differed from country to country and the pattern was consistent with the underlying differences in the creation of new jobs as described above. Consequently, most new female jobs in the United States and the United Kingdom were in the private sector, while in other countries, in particular in northern countries, most women found jobs as State employees. The relationship between the level of female participation, the rise in non-manual jobs and the expansion of services has been very close in all western market economies, and has closed the gap between men and women on the labour market.19/

28. Certainly, at the individual level the match was not perfect and not all women who lost their jobs in the textile or leather industries found new jobs in services. The new jobs were not necessarily located in the regions most affected by structural changes, and many women, especially older women and women with few skills, could not be retrained. The fast growing demand for female workers in the service sector in all western economies in the ECE region made it possible, however, for a growing number of women to remain and/or to join the labour market.

...a trend which may not continue in the 1990s...

29. Overall employment growth in the service sector, a primary source of new female jobs in the past, is expected to slow down in the 1990s, as compared to 1980s and a polarization of jobs is likely to occur. Currently, the service sector in North America and western Europe, in particular the financial sector, retailing and the public sector, is being restructured as manufacturing was in the 1980s, in response to financial constraints, competitive pressure and new technologies. Job cuts and early retirement schemes are introduced as firms consolidate or are taken over, in particular in the private sector. As discussed earlier, the pressure to reduce the public deficit and cut public spending has similar effects on women's jobs in the public sector.

...while in transition economies structural changes have just begun and their impact on women's employment is difficult to predict.

30. The existing data suggest that eastern and central European economies have already entered the period of structural adjustments stimulated by privatization. Since 1989 the service sector has expended rapidly in most countries of eastern and central Europe and at the same time the share of heavy capital goods, such as engineering and metallurgy, has declined and that of consumer goods, such as food processing and textiles, has been on the rise. The situation on the labour market in transition economies differs, however, significantly from that of western economies in the 1980s and the impact of these changes on women's employment is difficult to predict.20/

C. Pervasive impact of new technologies on economic activities

31. Technology change, led by the rapid progress in information technology, a major generic technology today, and in biotechnology and genetic engineering, has pervasive effects on the economy as a whole, including on production and consumption patterns, the organization of economic activities and lifestyles.

Computer-based technologies have changed the contents and organization of production processes...

32. Computer-based technologies initiated irreversible changes in the contents and organization of the production process in western market economies. Industries based on economies of scale have been replaced by industries based on economies of scope organized in a way which allows the production of small batches of widely varying products according to customer's specifications. New industries are quality- and customer-oriented and have a high conceptual component. They rely heavily on services such as design, marketing, advertising and after-sales services, which are an increasingly important and integral, part of manufacturing. The conventional division between services and manufacturing has become blurred, as a significant and growing part of the value added in manufacturing consists of services.

33. One of the consequences has been the proliferation of small, highly specialized and closely interrelated firms in accountancy, insurance, legal and financial consultancy, which employ workers with individual problem-solving capacity organized in flexible teams. These companies emerge in many countries as the main employers and often operate as intermediaries between the declining formal sector and the overcrowded informal sector. In the United States, for example, between 1981 and 1985, 88% of the net job creation was in

enterprises with 1 to 19 employees.21/ These companies are often keen to hire women, especially highly educated women with degrees in law, business or management, who, for a variety of reasons, are more willing than men to accept flexible working arrangements.

...focusing on the quality of human capital, redefining jobs...

34. Recent studies suggest that there is no evidence that technology creates unemployment. It is thought that the elimination of low-skilled jobs by automation processes is compensated by the creation of new, high-skilled and more productive jobs.22/ Technology change has, however, a significant impact on the move away from low-skilled jobs in both manufacturing and services. Workers' tasks become more versatile, requiring a good basic education and a commitment to continuous learning and on-the-job training. The service sector often requires not only social skills but also familiarity with information technologies. Designers, accountants and bankers now have to possess high general qualifications and understand modern manufacturing, computer programming and systems engineering. Progress in technology is also rapid in services and redefines numerous traditionally "female" occupations such as clerical jobs or nursing. Modern secretaries and nurses also have to be more technically oriented and able to understand and operate complex office or medical equipment.23/ Hiring is now more than ever an important investment decision, given the high costs of training a new worker and the fact that creative and well-educated workers are an important asset in mastering technical change.

...and career patterns in a move towards more flexible production systems.

35. The trend towards increasing the flexibility of production systems has been associated both with efforts to cut production costs and with the requirements of a modern production profile which has to react quickly to new technologies, changes in demand and economic environment. The latter increases the demand for horizontal mobility of workers able to perform various tasks within a company, whilst the former involves more external flexibility in terms of quantity and quality of employed workers. This is leading to a new employment pattern. It is built around a core group of full-time workers with a high level of "generic" technical knowledge combined with social skills (team work) and problem-solving capacity, and a large "periphery" including workers employed "when needed". The latter group often, though not exclusively, consists of lower-skilled and more narrowly specialized workers employed under non-standard contracts.

36. The result has been a fast growing variety of non-standard work contracts,24/ which have now become a more permanent feature of labour markets in western market economies, although their share varies significantly between countries.25/ The proliferation of atypical work contracts has some advantages, for example, flexible work schedules. Under the existing labour market regulations in most countries, they are, however, largely associated with low job security and lower pay and are most often used by firms to cut labour costs. The length of the contracts is subject to frequent changes; access to social benefits, training or upward mobility is limited and wages and salaries are, in general, lower than for full-time jobs. The non-standard employment market is highly feminized, although patterns of atypical work vary significantly across countries.

D. Globalization of economic activities and growing environmental concerns

37. Globalization encompasses not only the facilitation of international trade of goods but also the integration of national production systems through the increased mobility of capital and labour. In a broader sense, this process leads also to the integration of societies and many of their problems, such as the need for protecting the environment. During the last decade, the globalization of economic activities has accelerated significantly, with computer technologies making it possible to move money and information rapidly around the globe. Countries in the ECE region play a leading role in the globalization process both worldwide and within the region. The effect has been to increase the interdependence of their economies and policies in many areas, despite the simultaneous trends towards fragmentation and nationalism which have strengthened in the region since 1989.

The globalization process has sharpened competition and increased the mobility of capital and labour, linking national production systems worldwide...

38. Since the 1960s, during the broad liberalization process, barriers to international trade in goods, external financial transactions, transfer of technology and, more recently, services and some aspects of labour movements have been lowered. The process was uneven and highly influenced by government policies, as exemplified by successive rounds of negotiations within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and in particular the terms of the recently concluded Uruguay Round.

39. The increase in the mobility of capital across borders is closely related to foreign direct investment (FDI) and the emergence of transnational corporations (TNCs). Most TNCs come from the ECE region and they are now major actors on the global scene. Foreign-direct-investment flows, the principal measure of annual changes in the cross-border investment activities of TNCs, increased throughout the post-war period, experiencing unprecedented acceleration during the second half of the 1980s. Between 1985 and 1990, worldwide FDI outflows increased at a rate of 24% a year, almost twice as fast as that of the growth in exports and two and a half times as fast as that of the growth in world output.26/

40. Recent regional initiatives, such as those within the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA), and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) have eased restrictions on the mobility of labour, especially business people and professionals. Also, the Uruguay Round provides incipient rules for the negotiation of the progressive liberalization of the temporary movement of persons supplying services. Slower economic growth and the recession in the developed countries have led or will lead to the tightening of immigration laws, which could put a halt to these possibilities and hamper the internationalization of labour markets. So far, the number of migrating workers is limited and cross-border mobility affects only a small portion of the world's labour force. It is estimated that only 1.5% of the workforce is currently employed in countries outside those of their citizenship.27/

41. Although the labour market has remained largely closed, in particular for low-skilled labour, this is a relative statement, as the ECE countries have been the most important job market for foreign workers. Countries in western

Europe are now the largest employers of foreign workers in the world with some 6 million workers, followed by the United States and the Middle East (5 million each). A growing share of these workers come from developing countries and most are unlikely to become permanent residents in these host countries.28/

42. The globalization process, which constantly aims to reallocate production processes in search of the most advantageous conditions, in particular relatively cheap labour as compared to its quality, has a direct impact on the stability of women's jobs in manufacturing and services. This process also affects women indirectly through changes in work contracts and the working conditions of their family members. This has led more women migrants to leave their native countries independently, including through employment agencies, or to accompany a male family member. Overall, women migrants are vulnerable as a group; they usually work in isolation, often as domestic workers, without a support network or social protection. Some reside illegally in the host country and are exposed to sexual harassment and violence. Some women migrants follow a global career of their own or migrate because their husbands working with an international company are transferred.29/

...and at regional level...

43. The collapse of the centrally planned economic system opens new prospects for integrating eastern and central European countries with the west. The process is highly complex and involves economic and social concerns, given the differences in economic development, as well as unemployment problems and recessionary conditions in western Europe. One of the most difficult and urgent problems is an expected increase in migration to western Europe, in particular from poorer countries of eastern and central Europe, including refugees from war-affected zones. This pressure is very strong considering the wage gap and differences in living standards.30/ It could be, expected, however, that the improvement in economic performance in transition economies, especially in those that have made most progress in building a market economy and in the economic situation in western Europe, will result in closer ties between European countries.

...increasing the concerns for environmental protection...

44. Environmental concerns have a serious and growing, twofold impact on the economies within the ECE region. The degradation of the natural environment entails serious costs in terms of direct economic losses as a result of pollution damage to crops, damage to buildings from acid deposits, or a drop in revenues from tourism, as well as indirect ones by lowering the quality of life in many regions in Europe and North America. One central question continues to be its cost in terms of human health, as environmental degradation has been directly related to the increase in mortality rates and the decrease in life expectancy. At the same time the pressure to save the natural environment stimulates new research, leading to the development of new technologies and the emergence of new industries. Environment-related businesses and economic activities, such as low-waste technologies, recycling industries, natural food production and sales, are expanding rapidly in most countries in the ECE region, creating new jobs.

45. Environmental protection is now considered as a global problem and a real challenge for all Governments in the ECE region, which are having to decide

how to deal with the "free" public good that is our environment. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, forcefully brought home the importance of international action to conserve the biosphere, control climatic change, curb transfrontier pollution and preserve biological diversity. The regulation policies through bans, standards and licences are combined with economic instruments such as taxes and charges.31/ Economic measures, such as a proposal to apply a combined carbon/energy tax, are, for example, considered by the Commission of the European Communities. The Economic Commission for Europe initiates and coordinates many aspects of environmental cooperation at regional level. Since 1990, environment-related activities, which are now one of five priority areas for assistance programmes to the former planned economies, have focused on eastern and central Europe.

46. Women's involvement in environmental issues has traditionally been strong. Women's NGOs in North America, western and, increasingly, eastern and central Europe, have been very active in raising social awareness, indicating the most urgent actions to be taken, and participating in finding solutions at local, national, regional and international level. They are also motivated and interested in looking for environment-related jobs.

...redefining the concept of competitiveness ...

47. The concept of what makes a country competitive and prosperous has changed significantly over the last decade, or so. As illustrated by Japan and Singapore on the one hand and the former Soviet Union and other formerly planned economies on the other, the way national assets are managed, organized and combined matters more than their mere possession. Competitiveness and comparative advantages are increasingly associated with creative assets and the quality of human resources instead of traditional cost factors. Although some comparative advantages still exist, in particular in traditional industries, their role in establishing a country's position on global markets has been shrinking.32/

...and affecting the thinking on how institutions and social policies contribute to the development process.

48. Conceptually, the governance of more flexible production systems requires a redefinition of the role of the State and the market in the development process. Organizing and monitoring markets increases transaction costs and results in more externalities than in the mass production system of the 1950s and 1960s. The proliferation of internal and cross-border linkages between firms, research institutions, Governments, trade unions and individuals, imposed by technology change and competition, requires close and harmonious cooperation between a large number of independent economic agents. This breaks the traditional dichotomy between the state and the market where the two are considered as substitutes for each other. It is questioned on theoretical grounds whether the neoclassical framework, primarily concerned with how the market operates, could provide proper guidance to how the market develops 33/ and frequent are the calls for finding the best complementary combination between the State and market forces.34/

49. In a modern growth strategy, social policies have an important and active role to play, so perhaps, the concept of social efficiency should be reconsidered. Education, health, and environment policies but also income policies have a growing impact on economic performance through their

relationship with the quality of the labour force and social peace. Social coherence and solidarity determine the limits to social injustice beyond which it no longer serves as an incentive for better work.35/ Despite significant differences in these limits among countries, the levels of living standards and social benefits at which they are established have now increased as most societies tend to have high expectations for improvements in the quality of life. It could be speculated therefore that, with these expectations and the importance of quality aspects of human resources in the development process, the marginal "utility" of equity, as expressed in terms of efficiency, has increased in most societies. From this perspective human-centred development is not only an ultimate goal in itself but also a condition for sustained growth.36/ Once accepted, this reasoning has a number of policy implications such as the fact that social policies can no longer be considered as a "residual" component to be developed within a given macroeconomic context.37/

II. CHANGES IN WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

50. The main purpose of this section is to look at development trends within the ECE region from the women's perspective. It encompasses the evolution of women's position in the labour market and within the family at a time when the gap between the "gender" and "employment" contract is growing. Whilst the latter evolved significantly with the increase of women's participation in paid employment the former remained practically stagnant. The inconsistency of the "social contract" which embodies these two parts increasingly threatens the very foundations of the welfare state. It has resulted in the rapid devaluation of the norms that these contracts established (man as sole breadwinner and non-working wife) and ways through which men and women have been defined (men being individualized through public institutions, women through marriage and family).

A. Women and paid work

51. From a long-term perspective there have been three major trends in women's work: (i) more permanent attachment of women to the labour force; (ii) continuing vulnerability of their position at work; and (iii) increasing difficulty to reconcile work with family responsibilities.

"Permanent" housewife is rare as a career model for women within the ECE region as they have moved towards more active professional lifestyles ...

52. Women have changed their own behavioral patterns and there has been an exogenous shift in their preferences. They responded to the expanding job opportunities, increasing the female participation rate, a counterpart of the rise in the female share in employment discussed in chapter I, in all western market economies in the ECE region, except for Turkey, and very recently in eastern and central Europe. Almost 80% of women in Scandinavia or in eastern and central Europe work in the formal sector and around 40% have paid jobs in Greece, Ireland and Spain.

53. The rising female participation derived from a combination of social and economic changes which during the past twenty years have increased the rewards of participation and reduced the costs. Smaller families and improvements in technology to manage household tasks (cleaning, cooking, etc) were matched by

an improvement in women's education, diminishing the gap between male and female wages and, perhaps until recently, offering better access to jobs. Most women, in particular of the younger generation, now not only need paid employment for a variety of reasons, including changing family patterns, discussed below, but are also more often interested in pursuing a professional career of their own. Fewer women are now putting their careers on hold to get married or have children. The changing participation pattern according to age which is similar to that of men in a growing number of countries, would tend to indicate that fertility no longer prevents or interrupts women's work in the formal sector as it once did.

54. Women's increased economic independence resulting from paid work has had a number of consequences for the economy, affecting the levels and patterns of consumption and production. Second family incomes have increased the overall consumption potential. At the same time women's preferences, supported now by their own incomes and different in many ways from men's, stimulated the development of many "female"-oriented industries such as fashion or beauty products. Women's role in making decisions about family consumption also increased, creating jobs for other women, for instance, in real estate, now a highly feminized profession in most ECE countries. Although these arguments refer primarily to the situation in western market economies, it can be expected that similar trends will be observed in transition economies with the free play of market forces.

...although their position on the labour market is still very vulnerable...

55. Despite the considerable improvement in access to work, women's jobs are concentrated in repetitive, routine and badly paid jobs at the lower, often dead-end, level of the labour market. "Female" market segments are similar in western market economies and eastern and central European countries and are clustered in consumer industries, public sector and selected services (hotels, catering, secretarial jobs, retail trade, personal care). Women are also considered by enterprises as a large pool of flexible labour and their employment is commonly structured around areas of frequent labour adjustment. A large part of women's work in the formal sector is done under atypical work contracts offering not only lower pay but also a low level of social protection or none at all.

56. The reasons for women's vulnerability are complex. Most western market and eastern and central European economies already have an extensive legislative framework aimed at equal treatment of men and women in particular in paid employment. Many specific actions and programmes have also been undertaken at regional level, in particular in the European Community where the third equal opportunities action programme (1991-1995), focused on developing the legal framework, promoting jobs for women and improving women's status in society, is being implemented.38/ Under these conditions it could be assumed that the composition of female skills and knowledge, heavily biased in most countries towards social rather than technical areas, and perhaps more manual than conceptual in their overall content, mismatched with major trends in the demand for labour, explains some of the differences between women's and men's positions on the labour market.

57. Gender inequality, however, is more systemic and cannot be analysed outside the existing social contract, part of which is a gender contract which assigns productive and reproductive roles by gender. This is the traditional

gender contract which explains the socially accepted and "appropriate" profile for female education, access to vocational, on-the-job and other forms of education and training, and, perhaps most importantly, the time women have during their working day for learning purposes. This contract determines also the cost of women's labour; it sees reproduction as exclusively a female concern and reinforces the perception of women as "expensive", and perhaps less reliable labour because of maternity, child and other family-related benefits.

...and their future uncertain...

58. Persistent unemployment has increased competition on the labour market, including that in the traditional female occupations in the service sector such as nursing. Other economic trends and concomitant changes on the labour market are, so far, not encouraging and could have a negative impact on the majority of female jobs considering their vertical and horizontal segregation in all ECE countries. Technology changes and "lean" strategies in the state and private sector limit the number of new "female" jobs, and eliminate many of the old ones by altering their job descriptions and skill requirements. This applies in particular to many low or middle-level clerical or "caring" jobs, typically female positions, which tend to be eliminated, either because they are downgraded to low-skill positions or upgraded to more specialized posts.

59. At the same time women with advanced degrees in law, business or management could possibly benefit from new opportunities. This might be related to the development of highly specialized services, such as design, customization and maintenance to manufacturing in particular of high-technology products.39/ Job opportunities for women seem to be better in smaller companies than in large corporations. As discussed in chapter I, smaller companies, tend to provide a growing portion of new jobs in developed market economies and, to some extent, favour women's employment. Large corporations follow more traditional hiring practices with fewer part-time and atypical contracts. A recent survey of sixty managers of United States TNCs also shows that they hesitate to select women for assignments abroad because of safety concerns, the hazards of travelling as well as loneliness and isolation, especially for single women.40/ There may also be new job opportunities for women in self-employment and entrepreneurship, including as business consultants.

60. There are reasons to believe, however, that the labour market in the future will offer relatively few high-skilled and well paid white-collar jobs as compared to the large number of low-skilled and badly paid jobs. Among the twenty occupations which will generate the most new jobs in the United States by 2005, a majority are in services, and only three to five of these jobs (general managers and top executives; accountants and auditors; systems analysts and computer scientists, and perhaps secondary schools teachers and computer programmers) could be considered as high-skilled jobs, while the others are low-wage and unskilled positions in food services, health care and retailing (table 2). The choice between reskilling or accepting low-skill, low-pay jobs is not easy, as the upgrading of skills and investment in education will not necessarily guarantee a well paid job. This segment of the labour market is becoming very competitive in most western market economies of the region and many workers risk to be little rewarded by their efforts to improve their qualifications and learn new, often complicated, skills.41/

The polarization of jobs is also likely in most transition economies, although its pace and pattern could differ, in some countries even significantly, from the trends observed in the west.

Table 2

Twenty occupations with the most new jobs, 1990-2005
(Numbers in thousands)

Occupation	Projected employment growth, 1990-2005	
	Number	Per cent
Salespersons, retail	887	24.5
Registered nurses	767	44.4
Cashiers	685	26.0
General office clerks	670	24.5
Truck drivers	617	26.1
General managers and top executives	598	19.4
Janitors & cleaners, including maids & housekeepers	555	18.5
Nursing aides, orderlies and attendants	552	43.4
Food counter, fountain and related workers	550	34.2
Waiters and waitresses	449	25.7
Teachers, secondary school	437	34.2
Receptionists and information clerks	422	46.9
Systems analysis and computer scientists	366	78.9
Food preparation workers	365	31.6
Child care workers	353	48.8
Gardeners/groundskeepers	348	39.8
Accountants and auditors	340	34.5
Computer programmers	317	56.1
Teachers, elementary	313	23.0
Guards	298	33.7

Sources: Extrapolated from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 2402, May 1992, Table 3, p.80 in Needleman, Ruth, "Raising visibility, reducing marginality", study prepared for the U.S. Department of Labour, October 1993.

...and family responsibilities are increasingly difficult to combine with a professional career.

61. In all ECE countries the bulk of unpaid house work remains the woman's responsibility regardless of her status and position on the labour market.

Many countries in the ECE region have put in place supportive legislation, such as parental leave, which enables both women and men to share some of the family responsibilities. In many countries attitudes towards sharing responsibilities have also changed. In the United Kingdom, for example, 54% of respondents to a recent survey thought that the preparation of the evening meal should be shared, but only 20% actually did share it.42/ The gap between men's and women's shares in household chores is still great. According to recent surveys, working women in Canada or in France still spend, on average, over four hours a day doing unpaid work at home, twice as much as men.43/

62. Individual "survival" strategies differ according to women's economic status, type of work, education, family situation and traditions. Some have substantially increased the number of services bought from the outside, including the employment of live-in domestic help. Some rely on other women in the family such as mothers or grandmothers, a common solution in eastern and central Europe where the State infrastructure is crumbling and well developed private sector services are lacking. Increasingly demanding career paths, growing job insecurity and more competition on the labour market have made more women, in particular in large urban areas, decide to delay marriage and childbirth or perhaps even to remain single. Most of those who tried to combine career with family life are deeply frustrated by the experience of the "super-mom" track of the 1980s.

B. Social relations between men and women

63. Social relations between men and women have changed considerably over the past two decades challenging the traditional concept of the family and accelerating the erosion of the traditional "social contract".

The evolution of patterns of family formation and reproduction ...

64. During the past twenty years or so, patterns of family formation and reproduction have changed. The trends in North America and Europe show later and less frequent marriages, declining fertility rates, often below replacement levels, and rising divorce rates although the majority of divorcees remarry.44/ The change in family formation and reproduction reflects a number of complex socio-economic factors. Modern family planning methods, the introduction or liberalization of divorce laws, better access for women to higher education, women's need to and interest in pursuing paid work, but also the increasing costs of bringing up and educating children and the geographic mobility of labour could go some way towards explaining this fundamental social transformation. Its consequences include ageing societies endangering the labour supply in the decades to come as well as new lifestyles and higher expectations for women of younger generations.

...results in a growing number of alternative living arrangements and smaller families including single-parent families...

65. There are various views of what a family is. This results in different moral judgements on the present trends, which vary from moral decay to emancipation from patriarchal subordination.45/ The facts are, however, that the traditional two-parent family with children is less typical within the ECE region than a decade ago and the number of single-parent families, divorced or raising children born out of wedlock, as well as cohabiting couples and/or parents is on the rise. The share of married couples with children of all

households declined during 1960-1988 from 36 to 22% in Sweden and from 38 to 28% in the United Kingdom.46/ The share of single-parent families as a proportion of all family households is as high as 23% in the United States (1988) and 20% in Denmark to under 10% in southern Europe.

66. The rise in the incidence of cohabitation without marriage in a number of countries is sometimes temporary, leading eventually to marriage, or is treated as an alternative to the institution of marriage. The latter is frequent in the Netherlands and in Scandinavian countries but less so in central Europe. The number of births out of wedlock in the United States and in western Europe also increased, from 7.8% to 44.7% in Denmark and from 5.2% to 25.1% in the United Kingdom between 1960-1988. This, however, is interpreted differently in the light of family models. While in Scandinavian countries it should be seen as the result of cohabitation, in the United States and the United Kingdom it reflects rather teenage pregnancies, uncommon in Scandinavian countries.47/

67. During the 1980s the size of the average household, as measured by the number of persons per household, diminished in most ECE countries, as illustrated by figure II. The size of the average household in the EU countries, for example, decreased in all countries, though to a various degree, and now averages from 1.7 persons in Denmark to 3.4 persons in Spain.

...and elderly women living alone...

68. More and more elderly women live alone in North America, as well as in western, eastern and central Europe.48/ This reflects the overall ageing trend, in particular in western European societies, as well as the higher life expectancy for women than men which results in high levels of widowhood among elderly women. In the EU countries there are nearly twice as many old women (75+) as men.49/

69. This group of elderly women is especially vulnerable and at risk of social exclusion due to their lack of income, physical impairment or chronic illness. They are commonly disadvantaged in social security and pensions as compared to men.50/ Existing social protection is often inadequate to address their problems and there are fewer women available to provide such care on a voluntary basis. When such care is available it involves younger women who often have to care for both their children and their ageing mothers and/or mothers-in-law at the same time.

...which together with the increasing number of dual-income families illustrates the erosion of the traditional "social" contract within the ECE region.

70. The erosion of the traditional social contract has been marked though certainly uneven across the ECE region. It differed among countries in relation to patterns of women's employment, tradition and culture, and varied across social groups, urban and rural areas and at household level. The existing "social" contract has, however, been continuously challenged by the economic and social transformation in the ECE region. Women are no longer confined to the role of housewives and men are not the only breadwinners. At the same time full-time, secure male jobs are increasingly scarce and many men live on unemployment benefit. Globalization and technology also impose more

flexible working contracts and may require many families to live apart for shorter or longer periods of time, which may further affect the traditional unity and stability of a family.

III. POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS: SLOW PACE OF UPDATING THE WELFARE STATE

71. The response at institutional and policy levels to the new developments and the erosion of the traditional social contract has so far been very limited. This section presents a short overview of institutional change and policies within the ECE region based on stylized facts rather than detailed description of the evolution of national policies and institutional adjustments. Both the former and the latter varied, often significantly, at country level and over time.

Deregulation and privatization policies ...

72. During the last decade Governments in western market economies and elsewhere followed the neoclassical prescription on how to deal with new economic and social problems. During the 1980s, in response to declining economic performance and mounting inflationary pressure, Governments in the ECE region withdrew from the direct management of economic activities through privatization and deregulation policies and adopted more restrictive macroeconomic policies. Fighting inflation was given priority over maintaining full employment through tightening the control of monetary aggregates and establishing monetary stability. The reduction in aggregate demand resulted in a loss of output and contributed to unemployment.51/ More recently, the deregulation of labour markets, combined with selective protection of the most affected social groups and perhaps, more education and training, has been gaining ground in western Europe as a reaction of Government to unemployment and recession. The United States seems to be moving in the opposite direction, trying to diminish the most drastic inequalities in society with recent proposals for health care reform and the introduction of social security.

73. Similar policy schemes to improve economic efficiency have been applied, on an unprecedented scale, in eastern and central Europe after 1989 in order to "fix" the centrally planned system. Most Governments in these countries followed the traditional mix of monetary and fiscal policies. Privatization-cum-stabilization programmes accompanied by extensive liberalization and deregulation of economic activities have proceeded, but have come under increasing pressure from society that wishes to maintain the level of social benefits. These policies are now being reassessed both in transition economies and in western market economies against the background of unemployment, the slow recovery from recession and the stretched institutional capabilities to deal with new problems.

...failed to recognize and address the social implications of the new situation in the region at large ...

74. Macroeconomic policies of developed market economies, consistent with economic models, have been little concerned with the comprehensive analysis and subsequent adjustments of the existing welfare systems to the new economic and social situation. The discussion focused primarily on how to curb the level of social expenditure to achieve global monetary and fiscal equilibrium and not on how to adapt the expenditure to the new problems. So far, the

social and political implications of ageing populations, the feminization of the labour force, long-term unemployment, the impoverished workforce, fast growing polarization of incomes and new patterns of poverty including among refugees and migrants, have received little recognition at policy level, in particular in the context of a longer-term growth strategy and growth prospects. This contrasts with a growing consensus that the world's economic difficulties are not transient but largely related to a fundamental mutation of the contemporary economy.52/

...and the new role for women in the economy...

75. Women seem to be disproportionately affected by the slow pace of institutional adjustment. The existing welfare systems differ significantly among countries and do not treat women in the same way. The levels and quality of protection, as well as the premises on which the entitlements are granted, that is "individual" or "derived" entitlements, differ within the liberal regime, with market patriarchalism and a residual welfare state, such as in the United States; in the "Nordic" social-democratic regime with egalitarian policies and in the conservative regime with welfare state patriarchalism and an institutional welfare state of Germany or Austria. Women's situation is different again in the "Latin Rim"-type country with agrarian/clerical patriarchalism and elementary welfare systems, such as in Greece or Spain, where a high proportion of people is not eligible for benefits. Neither of these regimes, however, except the Nordic model in some areas, allows women to combine a career with balanced family life.53/

... which revealed signs of an institutional crisis across the region...

76. Throughout the ECE region there is a sense of institutional crisis both in terms of formal institutions, such as labour market regulation, education systems, and in terms of informal norms of behaviour that people use to explain the world and determine how it ought to be. The major premises on which western welfare systems have been based (inter-generational balance, stable and unified family, secure employment, and a limited degree of conflict between family and professional life) depended largely on the traditional role of women. The change in the women's role in the economy has destroyed this balance. In a broader sense, it could be argued that institutions built to accommodate the hierarchical relationship between the State, business and labour in the mass production system are now increasingly unable to cope with the service economy, flexible and feminized production systems, the global perspective and the rise in overall uncertainty. The crisis is even greater in transition economies struggling to combine principles of solidarity with market structures and coming to terms with the basic values of market philosophy.

... and made the modernization of the welfare state and new approach to "women's" issues a major challenge of the 1990 for all countries in the ECE region.

77. The need to modernize the welfare state and update the social contract has recently been illustrated in a series of recommendations by some international organizations including OECD and the Commission of the European Communities.54/ The search for a new "geometry" between the State, the private sector, the community and individual households in defining their responsibilities in the development process have to accommodate the gender

context and the consequences of women's new position in the economy. The change is needed at several levels simultaneously: how formal institutions are organized, how policies are formulated and how people interact with each other. This includes questions of attitudes and social norms which exert an informal control over many aspects of the formal institutions. The rise and religious fundamentalism in the ECE region, as exemplified by the introduction of anti-abortion laws and other restrictive social norms in women's life and activities, clearly demonstrates that such an impact could be very significant.

78. Part of the updating of the welfare state has to be a new approach to and a new level of discussion on "women's" issues. Through their work, in particular in the service sector, women's qualifications and productivity directly affect the country's economic performance. They are thus an important human resource. The improvement of women's education, health and overall situation could have a multiplier effect on society as a whole via their "caring" and "educating" activities as teachers, health and social workers or as mothers. These functions have to be recognized, and eventually upgraded, against human-centred development strategies. This provides yet another argument that reproduction and family responsibilities can no longer be seen as a "free" good (or rather service) and as a "women's" concern. Women's role in a modern growth strategy is thus rapidly evolving. Women are less "social" and more "economic", whilst there is an increasing awareness that in many ways the character of growth has become more "social" and perhaps less "economic" in the traditional sense.

IV. KEY AREAS OF GENDER CONCERN

79. Against the background of development trends, changes in women's position and the slow modernization of institutions and policies, there are four main areas of concern for women: (i) access to and participation in the learning process; (ii) improvement of job security and access to quality jobs; (iii) reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities; and (iv) alleviation of poverty.

A. Access to and participation in the learning process

80. In most countries women are now increasingly defined through work and public institutions. This requires individual development of qualifications and skills. Access to and active participation in the learning process in a broad sense is one of the major factor determining women's role in western and eastern European economies. The learning process encompasses numerous and diversified forms of education - both formal and informal - which has to be continued throughout women's lives. The main objective of this process is a better understanding of the choices available to women in the new economic environment and the acquisition of skills and knowledge to realize individual goals and career options. Women's access to and participation in the learning process is closely connected with the type of welfare system. It cannot be identified only with the formal education that such a system provides but also with the more equitable distribution of family responsibilities at family, community and society level. The decision to participate or not in the learning process is often not a woman's free choice but the result of the constraints imposed on her by her daily schedule at work and within the family. Investing in women's education is worth, perhaps, preferential

treatment, considering their new role in the economy, the current demographic trends and the high returns such investment could bring to society.55/

81. **Directions for action**:

(a) Initiate and encourage women's participation in a process of life-long learning at all levels and in all forms including in particular vocational training, on-the-job training, and the search for innovative forms of training which will fit women's daily schedules;

(b) Eliminate gender bias and traditional thinking on the "appropriate" model of female education and promote women's educational choices which reflect current and future labour market trends;

(c) Equip women with a good level of "generic" skills and knowledge which could be developed further and easily adapted to changing labour market requirements;

(d) Encourage and support women's education and development of skills in information technologies and related subjects;

(e) Create incentives for enterprises to invest in human resources which in some cases, in particular in small enterprises, could favour women.

B. Improvement of job security and access to quality jobs

82. There are three major challenges for women at work, i.e. finding the best strategies to (i) compete for full-time and well paid jobs at the core of the employment structure; (ii) increase the security and remuneration of work under part-time and atypical contracts; and (iii) ensure equal treatment, protection and access to resources in a deregulated small business sector, including self-employment and entrepreneurship. Although all these problems are general labour market issues, they are more relevant to women than men due to the existing employment pattern. Facing the first challenge certainly requires more and better education in line with the changing demand for skills and knowledge. This is discussed above and all directions for action apply also here.

83. The second challenge concerns problems of flexible employment. It is a new and fast growing form of employment, which will probably generate most new jobs in the future. It is also a market segment which is now at the fringe of labour market regulations. It is thus highly insecure as a form of employment, usually provides lower levels of income and interrupts a career track, most often affecting promotion. Solving problems of flexible contracts is complex given the present labour market situation and the fact that accepting many of the disadvantages of part-time employment is at the very heart of women's competitive advantage in this market segment. The strategy could involve actions towards improving the legislative framework for non-standard employment and women's competitive position on this market in order to make atypical contracts a career of choice. This would make it possible to enjoy the flexibility of this type of employment and limit many, or at least some, of the existing disadvantages.

84. **Directions for action:**

(a) Set employment conditions on an equal footing and promote equality of treatment for those in atypical work contracts;

(b) Encourage mobility between non-standard and standard employment;

(c) Support part-time employment as a woman's choice not as her only job opportunity;

(d) Improve representation and advocacy networks for workers under atypical work contracts in collective bargaining.

85. Women are increasingly employed in small firms with less job security. They also seek self-employment often as a response to the lack of job opportunities in the public and private sector resulting from recession and restructuring.

86. **Directions for action:**

(a) Enhance and facilitate women's access to advice on how to become self-employed, and to credit;

(b) Develop an infrastructure supporting the formation and activities of small and medium enterprises.

C. Reconciliation of professional and family life

87. An "adapt and survive" strategy on a contemporary labour market is not possible without a comprehensive approach to the problem of reconciliation of professional and family life. This does not imply that all women have to follow the same career model. There are a variety of ways to combine professional and family life depending on a woman's age, preferences, economic situation, tradition or culture. It could be assumed, however, that the majority of European women, in particular young women, will be professionally active during their lifetime and will also want to have children and so may wish to include some breaks in their career. Policies to tackle this problem have to cut across many labour and social issues and should reflect the change in the traditional thinking on gender roles. Raising a family is also in the interest of the society at large, in particular given the current demographic changes in the region, and both women and men should be involved in this process.

88. **Directions for action**:

(a) Eliminate the concept of the sole breadwinner in the two-adult family as the norm for tax systems and social security policies;

(b) Encourage men to take advantage of the established legislation to increase their share of parenting and family care;

(c) Search for an innovative solution to modify the traditional division for raising and caring for the family between the State, the private sector and the local community in order to create a family-

friendly infrastructure in particular in the area of child care and care for the elderly;

(d) Establish systems that ensure more flexibility for workers in planning their working day and make possible temporary exits from employment without adverse effects on their career;

(e) Promote, through the media and other forms of dissemination, a change in socially accepted norms and a more equal division of responsibilities for work and family between men and women.

D. Feminization of poverty

89. Women face an increased risk of poverty as a result of the current labour market trends and the changes in the composition of the family. Women are more likely to be the "working poor" than men, providing the chief supply of low-level and low-pay jobs and atypical employment. Women are also more likely than men to be a lone parent bringing up children or to be an elderly person living alone. Poverty eradication strategies have often had a limited impact on improving women's situation, since they are primarily concerned with the monetized economy and tend to target men directly as breadwinners. Household resources are often not equally shared within the family which seems to explain why poverty affects women in a different way than men.56/

90. **Directions for action:**

(a) Develop measures to identify groups of women in poverty and studies aimed at establishing patterns of the flows of women in and out of poverty and exclusion situations;

(b) Support changes to the social safety net in order to reach women in poverty directly;

(c) Stop the deterioration of public health programmes and support the improvement of reproductive, maternity and child-care services;

(d) Develop training and education programmes for women working at the lowest end of the labour market.

Conclusions

91. In a longer-term perspective, women's role in the economy will be determined by two major factors: their adaptability to the new requirements of the labour market and global competition and their impact on adjusting the institutional framework and policies in order to make them gender-sensitive.

92. European economies are in the midst of institutional, structural and organizational changes at micro and macro level. The low presence of women in decision-making positions in business and local communities as well as at national and international level seriously limits their impact on the shape of those changes. However, many of these changes touch upon issues vital to women's present and future role in the economy. Women's presence in establishing the new rules of the game at regional and national, community and family level through the articulation of women's interests, or negotiations to make them compatible with the interests of other social groups and in

finalizing the decision making process is crucial in order to successfully integrate women into the modern economy.

93. Gender-responsive development is not just a matter of "women's" interest against their contribution to economic and social activities. Gender-responsive development is an integral part of the concept of sustainable and human-centred development from which the whole society could benefit.

NOTES

1. On the whole, the past debate on women's role in the economy painted either a mostly black or a white picture of women's relationship with development. The optimistic view (integration hypothesis) assumed an automatic opening of new opportunities with the increased integration of women into the labour market whilst the pessimistic view underlined marginalization (Boserup, Ester, 1970: Women's Role in Economic Development, Allen and Unwin, London) and exploitation aspects claiming that women are simply used as a cheap and flexible labour force. The latter approach seems to have gained importance in the late 1980s. (Mitter, Swasti, 1986: Common Fate, Common Bond: Women in Global Economy, London; Moghadam, Valentine M.,1990: Gender, Development, and Policy: Toward Equity and Empowerment, WIDER, Helsinki; Del Alba Acevedo, Luz, 1990: Industralization and Employment: Changes in Patterns of Women's Work in Puerto Rico, World Development, Vol.18, No.2., pp.231-255.

2. Preliminary version of the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1994), 3 March 1994. The full report was not yet completed at the time of preparation of the present report. Also: Looking beyond Women: Seeing Gender Concepts in Development Planning, INSTRAW, 1994.

3. The Economic Role of Women in the ECE region: Developments 1975/85, ECE, United Nations, New York, 1985.

4. The ECE economies in mid-1994, Economic Commission for Europe, Geneva, July 1994.

5. This growth was both in absolute terms and in proportion to the labour force. Economic Survey of Europe 1993-1994, p. 43.

6. Economic Survey of Europe 1993-1994, p.44.

7. Ibid, pp.83-89.

8. It has to be mentioned, however, that the level of female unemployment, based on registration, is likely to understate its actual level, at least in some countries, such as the United Kingdom where many women work part-time or under other atypical work contracts with no benefits or entitlements and thus little incentive to register as unemployed. This could also be true for the CIS countries where unemployment benefits are low. Economic Survey of Europe 1993-1994, pp. 44 and 87.

9. Growth prospects are falling for most western market economies below an estimated level of 2.5% necessary to just stand still in a labour market which is expanding by about 0.5% a year, The International Herald Tribune, 10 March 1994.

10. The OECD Observer, No. 183, August/September 1993.

11. Ibid.

12. Social protection in Europe, Commission of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1994, p.33.

13. As indicated by Schmid (1991) in the 1970s and 1980s there was a high correlation between the size of the public sector and the female-intensity in public employment. For further discussion on women's situation in the public sector in developed market economies see: Gunther Schmid "Women and Employment Restructuring: Women in the Public Sector", OECD/GD (91)213.

14. The Economist, 11 June 1994.

15. Baden, Sally, 1993: The Impact of recession and structural adjustment on women's work in developing and developed countries, IDP Women/WP-19, ILO, Geneva.

16. Conroy, Pauline and Niamh Flanagan (1993) Women and Poverty in the European Community: Issues in the Current Debate, Commission of the European Communities, V/42/94-EN.

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25. As measured by the share of total employment, part-time employment, which is the most popular form of flexible employment and the one with available data, the share of non-standard employment in the labour market is as high as over 33% in the Netherlands and as low as less than 9% of total employment in Austria. OECD Employment Outlook, July 1993.

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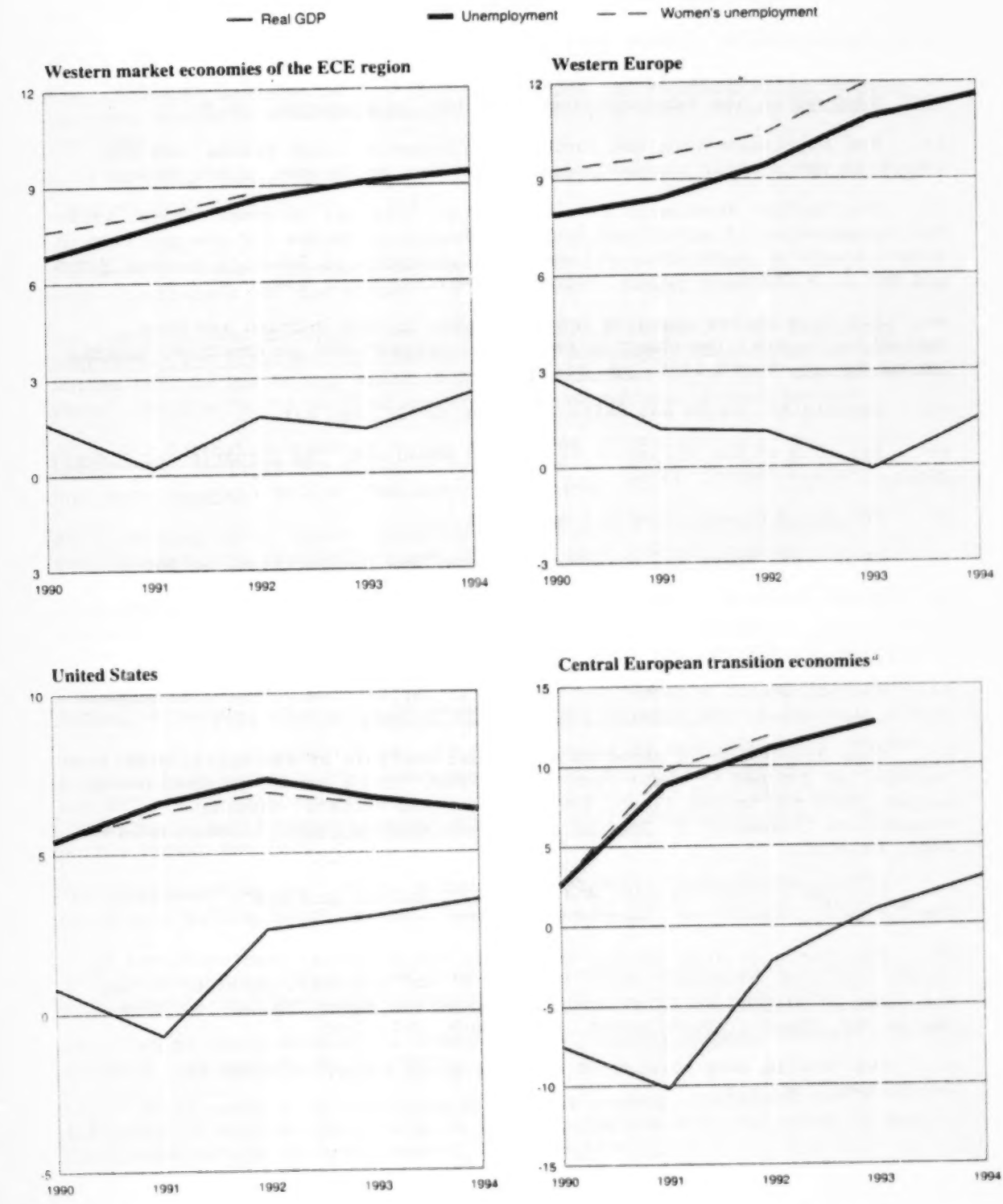
Figure I

Growth of real GDP, unemployment rates and women's unemployment rates in the ECE region, 1990-1994

(Per cent)

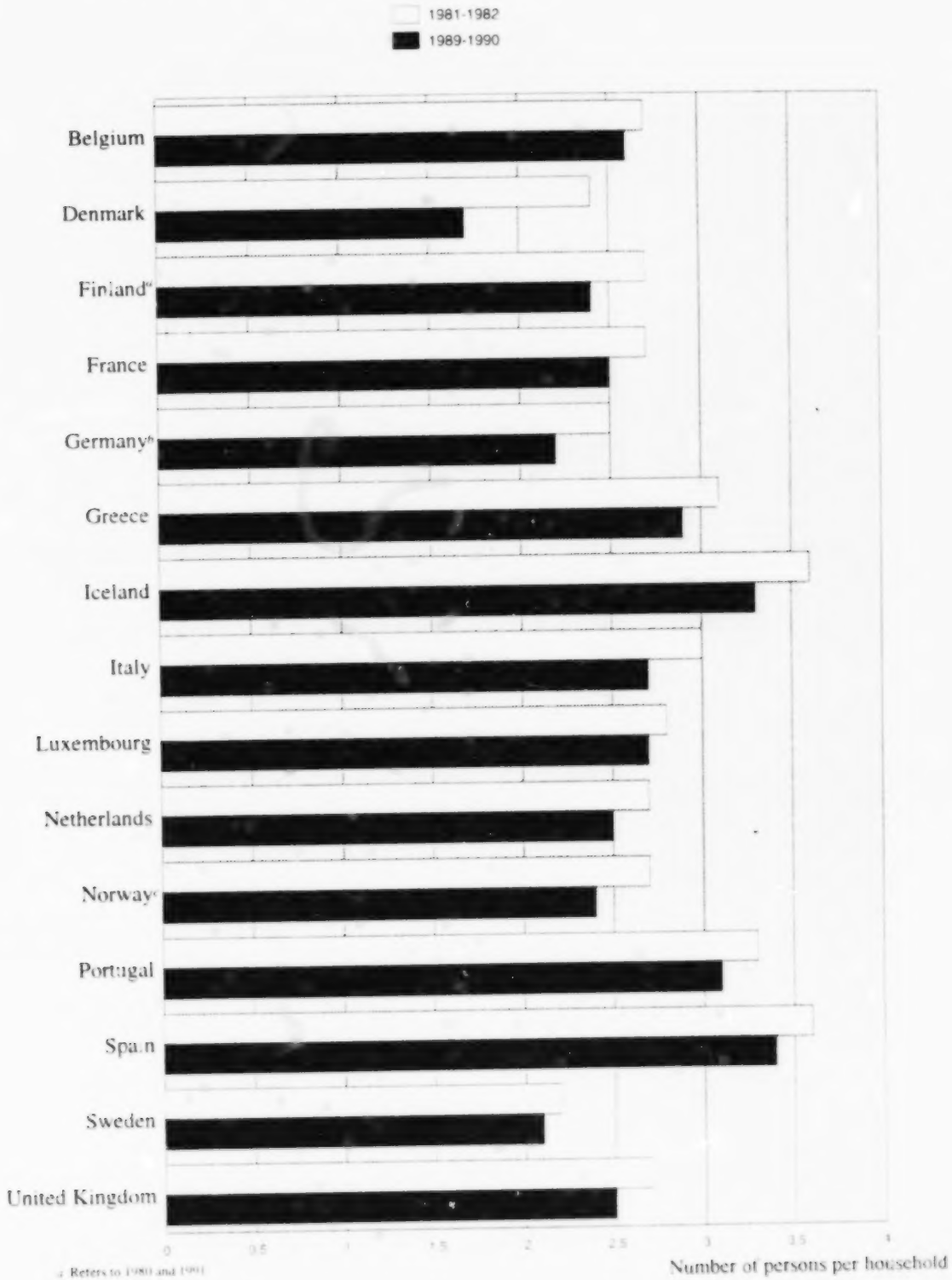


a Includes Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia.

Sources: UN/ECE, *Economic Survey of Europe in 1993-1994*; ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1993*; OECD, *Quarterly Labour Force Statistics* No. 1 and No. 4, 1994 and estimates.

Figure II

Changes in the size of an average household in selected ECE countries



a Refers to 1980 and 1991.
b West Germany.
c Refers to 1980 and 1990.

Sources: *On women and men in Sweden* and *EC Facts in figures* (Luxembourg, 1992) Statistics Sweden; *Yearbook of Nordic Statistics* 1992